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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000600

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: POLLS SHOW KIRCHNER-ALLIED FPV SLIGHTLY  
AHEAD IN KEY ELECTORAL DISTRICT BUT STILL LIKELY TO LOSE  
SEATS

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 0443 AND PREVIOUS (B) BUENOS  
AIRES 0561

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

¶1. (SBU) With six weeks before the June 28 congressional midterms, the Kirchner-allied ruling Victory Front (FpV) continues to enjoy a slim advantage in the key electoral district of Buenos Aires province, but possibly not enough to maintain its majority in the Lower House, according to recent polls. With 35 of the 127 national deputies up for election, the province of Buenos Aires (with 37% of the national vote) is the electoral plum, and is the Kirchners' main hope for retaining the FpV's slim working majority in the Congress -- particularly since they are widely expected to lose in the next four biggest districts: the Federal District, and the provinces of Cordoba, Santa Fe, and Mendoza (ref A). Nonetheless, even the most favorable projections indicate that the FpV will likely lose between five to six national deputy seats, winning 14 or 15 of their 20 seats at stake. Currently, the FpV has 115 seats and can count on some 20 allied votes to obtain its working majority of 129.

¶2. (SBU) Six recent polls published in leading daily "Clarín" May 17 give the FpV slate led by former President Nestor Kirchner (NK) and Buenos Aires Governor Daniel Scioli an electoral advantage ranging from 2.6% to 9.8% over their closest competitors in the Buenos Aires provincial race, the Peronist dissident slate, and the UCR-Radical slate. The polls, conducted by polling firms Equis, Julio Aurelio consultants, CEOP, Management and Fit, Insomnia, and Ibarometro, are the first to be published since parties registered their candidate slates (ref B) May 9. The results from the six firms project NK winning between 26.6% and 34.1% of the vote in Buenos Aires province, with Equis polling firm showing the highest percentage (34.1%) by factoring in its projection of how currently undecided voters will split. (Note: Led by Artemio Lopez, Equis is one of the Kirchners' preferred polling firms.) "Clarín" did not publish the margin of error for these polls or the date of polling, but leading daily "Perfil" reported on May 17 similar results from a nationwide Management and Fit poll conducted between May 13-15 with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.9%. Considering such a margin of error, the FpV could squeak by with its desired 35% to win the province.

¶3. (SBU) All six polling firms placed the FpV slate first, and five of them put the Peronist dissident slate in second place followed by the Radical Party (UCR) - Civic Coalition (CC) slate. According to the polls, the Peronist dissident slate, headed by national deputies Francisco de Narvaez and Felipe Sola, would receive between 17.5% and 30.1%. The UCR-CC slate, led by CC candidate Margarita Stolbizer and Ricardo Alfonsín (the son of the recently deceased President Raul Alfonsín) is projected to capture anywhere from 13.8% to 21.7% of the votes. Only Ibarometro's poll has the Peronist

dissident slate in third with 17.5% after the UCR-CC slate with 21.0%.

14. (SBU) "Clarín" noted that even the poll results most favorable to the Kirchner-FpV slate would result in a net loss in Buenos Aires province of five or six of the 20 congressional deputies currently held by the FpV. The article recalled that the Kirchners won 46% of the votes in the province in 2007 and a similar percentage in 2005, which gave them the majority of the province's seats in Congress. Even if Nestor Kirchner's slate comes in first place on June 28 with 35% of the vote, that kind of victory will only yield 15-16 of the 35 seats at stake (20 of which are currently held by the FpV).

15. (C) Comment: To a certain extent, Kirchner has succeeded in getting the political class to focus on the congressional race in Buenos Aires province, a long-time Peronist stronghold, as the one race that will define the national election. The polls published in "Clarín" suggest the FpV's prospects of securing a strong victory in Buenos Aires province are increasingly unlikely. Even if NK succeeds in achieving his desired win of 35% in the province, the net loss of seats from Buenos Aires province, in addition to expected losses in the next largest electoral districts of the Federal District, Córdoba, Santa Fe and Mendoza provinces, will threaten the FpV's majority in Congress. The Kirchners' FpV, as the party in power, will also have to contend with the fact that over half the electorate voted against it. We fully expect all three major blocks -- the Kirchners' FpV, the dissident Peronists, and the UCR-Civic Coalition -- to go into overdrive June 29 as they try to spin the results their way and each claim victory, but if current

trends continue, it will be hard for Kirchner to make a convincing case.

WAYNE